

Beverly of Graustark

By
GEORGE BARR M'GUTCHEON,
Author of "Graustark"
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Gabriel!" cried Beverly, frowning fiercely.

"Alas," sighed the princess, "he hasn't an army, and besides he is finding it extremely difficult to keep from being annihilated himself. The army has gone over to Prince Gabriel."

"Pooh!" scoffed Miss Calhoun, who was thinking of the enormous armies the United States can produce at a day's notice. "What good is a ridiculous little army like his anyway? A battalion from Fort Thomas could beat it to!"

"Don't boast, dear," interrupted Yette, with a wan smile. "Dawsbergen has a standing army of 10,000 excellent soldiers. With the war reserves she has twice the available force I can produce."

"But your men are so brave!" cried Beverly, who had heard their praises sung.

"True—God bless them!—but you forget that we must attack Gabriel in his own territory. To recapture him means a perilous expedition into the mountains of Dawsbergen, and I am sorely afraid. Oh, dear, I hope he'll surrender peacefully!"

"And go back to jail for life?" cried Miss Calhoun. "It's a good deal to expect of him, dear. I fancy it's much better fun kicking up a rumpus on the outside than it is kicking one's toes off against an obdurate stone wall from the inside. You can't blame him for fighting a bit."

"No, I suppose not," agreed the princess miserably. "Gren is actually happy over the miserable affair, Beverly. He is full of enthusiasm and positively aching to be in Graustark—right in the thick of it all. To hear him talk one would think that Prince Gabriel has no show at all. He kept me up till 4 o'clock this morning telling me that Dawsbergen didn't know what kind of a snag it was going up against. I have a vague idea what he means by that. His manner did not leave much room for doubt. He also said that we would jolt Dawsbergen off the map. It sounds encouraging at least, doesn't it?"

"It sounds very funny for you to say those things," admitted Beverly, "even though they come secondhand. You were not out out for slang."

"Why, I'm sure they are all good English words," remonstrated Yette.



Her hearers stared at the picturesque recruit.

"Oh, dear, I wonder what they are doing in Graustark this very instant. Are they fighting or?"

"No; they are merely talking. Don't you know, dear, that there is never a fight until both sides have talked themselves out of breath? We shall have six months of talk and a week or two of fight, just as they always do nowadays."

"Oh, you Americans have such a comfortable way of looking at things," cried the princess. "Don't you ever see the serious side of life?"

"My dear, the American always lets the other fellow see the serious side of life," said Beverly.

"You wouldn't be so optimistic if a country much bigger and more powerful than America happened to be the other fellow."

"It did sound frightfully boastful, didn't it? It's the way we've been brought up, I reckon—even we southerners, who know what it is to be whipped. The idea of a girl like me talking about war and trouble and all that! It's absurd, isn't it?"

"Nevertheless, I wish I could see things through those dear gray eyes of yours. Oh, how I'd like to have you with me through all the months that are to come. You would be such a help to me, such a joy. Nothing would seem

so hard if you were there to make me see things through your brave American eyes. The princess put her arms about Beverly's neck and drew her close.

"But Mr. Lorry possesses an excellent pair of American eyes," protested Miss Beverly, loyally and very happily.

"I know, dear, but they are a man's eyes. Somehow there is a difference, you know. I wouldn't dare cry when he was looking, but I could boo-hoo all day if you were there to comfort me. He thinks I am very brave, and I'm not," she confessed dismally.

"Oh, I'm an awful coward," explained Beverly consolingly. "I think you are the bravest girl in all the world," she added. "Don't you remember what you did at?"—and then she recalled the stories that had come from Graustark ahead of the bridal party two years before. Yette was finally obliged to place her hand on the enthusiastic visitor's lips.

"Peace," she cried, blushing. "You make me feel like a—a—what is it you call her, a dime novel heroine?"

"A yellow back girl? Never!" exclaimed Beverly severely.

Visitors of importance in administration circles came at this moment, and the princess could not refuse to see them. Beverly Calhoun reluctantly departed, but not until after giving a promise to accompany the Lorrays to the railway station.

The trunks had gone to be checked, and the household was quieter than it had been in many days. There was an air of depression about the place that had its inception in the room upstairs where sober faced Halkins served dinner for a not overtalkative young couple.

"It will be all right, dearest," said Lorry, divining his wife's thoughts as she sat staring rather soberly straight ahead of her. "Just as soon as we get to Edelweiss the whole affair will look so simple that we can laugh at the fears of today. You see, we are a long way off just now."

"I am only afraid of what may happen before we get there, Gren," she said simply. He leaned over and kissed her hand, smiling at the emphasis she unconsciously placed on the pronoun.

Beverly Calhoun was announced just before coffee was served and a moment later was in the room. She stopped just inside the door, clicked her little heels together and gravely brought her hand to "salute." Her eyes were sparkling and her lips trembled with suppressed excitement.

"I think I can report to you in Edelweiss next month, general," she announced, with soldierly dignity. Her hearers stared at the picturesque recruit, and Halkins so far forgot himself as to drop Mr. Lorry's lump of sugar upon the table instead of into the cup.

"Explain yourself, sergeant!" finally fell from Lorry's lips. The eyes of the princess were beginning to take on a rapturous glow.

"May I have a cup of coffee, please, sir? I've been so excited I couldn't eat a mouthful at home." She gracefully slid into the chair Halkins offered and broke into an ecstatic giggle that would have resulted in a court martial had she been serving any commander but Love.

With a plenteous supply of southern idioms she succeeded in making them understand that the major had promised to let her visit friends in the legation at St. Petersburg in April, a month or so after the departure of the Lorrays.

"He wanted to know where I'd rather spend the spring—Washington or Lexington—and I told him St. Petersburg. We had a terrific discussion, and neither of us ate a speck at dinner. Mamma said it would be all right for me to go to St. Petersburg if Aunt Josephine was still of a mind to go too. You see, auntie was scared almost out of her boots when she heard there was prospect of war in Graustark, just as though a tiny little war like that could make any difference away up in Russia, hundreds of thousands of miles away"—with a scornful wave of the hand—"and then I just made auntie say she'd go to St. Petersburg in April, a whole month sooner than she expected to go in the first place, and!"

"You dear, dear Beverly!" cried Yette, rushing joyously around the table to clasp her in her arms.

"And St. Petersburg really isn't a hundred thousand miles from Edelweiss!" cried Beverly gayly.

"It's much less than that," said Lorry, smiling. "But you surely don't expect to come to Edelweiss if we are fighting. We couldn't think of letting you do that, you know. Your mother

would never!"

"My mother wasn't afraid of a much bigger war than yours can ever hope to be!" cried Beverly resentfully. "You can't stop me if I choose to visit Graustark."

"Does your father know that you contemplate such a trip?" asked Lorry, returning her hand clasp and looking doubtfully into the swimming blue eyes of his wife.

"No, he doesn't," admitted Beverly a trifle aggressively.

"He could stop you, you know," he suggested. Yette was discreetly silent.

"But he won't know anything about it," cried Beverly triumphantly.

"I could tell him, you know," said Lorry.

"No, you couldn't do anything so mean as that," announced Beverly. "You're not that sort."

CHAPTER III.

APONDEROUS coach lumbered slowly, almost painfully, along the narrow road that skirted the base of a mountain. It was drawn by four horses, and upon the seat sat two rough, unkempt Russians, one holding the reins, the other lying back in a lazy doze. The month was June, and all the world seemed soft and sweet and joyous. To the right flowed a turbulent mountain stream, boiling savagely with the alien waters of the flood season. Ahead of the creaking coach rode four horsemen, all heavily armed; another quartette followed some distance in the rear. At the side of the coach an officer of the Russian mounted police was riding easily, jangling his accouterments with a vigor that disheartened at least one occupant of the vehicle. The windows of the coach doors were lowered, permitting the fresh mountain air to caress fondly the face of the young woman who tried to find comfort in one of the broad seats. Since early morn she had struggled with the hardships of that seat, and the late afternoon found her very much out of patience. The opposite seat was the resting place of a substantial colored woman and a stupendous pile of bags and boxes. The boxes were continually toppling over, and the bags were forever getting under the feet of the once placid servant, whose face, quite luckily, was much too black to reflect the anger she was able otherwise, through years of practice, to conceal.

"How much farther have we to go, lieutenant?" asked the girl on the rear seat plaintively, even humbly. The man was very deliberate with his English. He had been recommended to her as the best linguist in the service at Radovitch, and he had a reputation to sustain.

"It another hour is but yet," he managed to inform her, with a confident smile.

"Oh, dear," she sighed, "a whole hour of this!"

"We soon be dar, Miss Be'vly. Jes' yo' mak' up yo' min' to res' easy-like, an' we'll— But the faithful old colored woman's advice was lost in the wrath-

ful exclamation that accompanied another dislodgment of bags and boxes. The wheels of the coach had dropped suddenly into a deep rut. Aunt Fanny's growls were scarcely more potent than poor Miss Beverly's moans.

"It is getting worse and worse," exclaimed Aunt Fanny's mistress petulantly. "I'm black and blue from head to foot, aren't you, Aunt Fanny?"

"Ah! calm say as to de blue, Miss Be'vly. It's a mos' monstrous bad road, sho' nough. Stay up dar, will yo'?" she concluded, jamming a bag into an upper corner.

Miss Calhoun, tourist extraordinary, again consulted the linguist in the saddle. She knew at the outset that the quest would be hopeless, but she could think of no better way to pass the next hour than to extract a mite of information from the officer.

"Now for a good old chat," she said, beaming a smile upon the grizzled Russian. "Is there a decent hotel in the village?" she asked.

They were on the edge of the village before she succeeded in finding out all that she could, and it was not a great deal, either. She learned that the town of Balak was in Axphain, scarcely a mile from the Graustark line. There was an eating and sleeping house on the main street, and the population of the place did not exceed 300.

When Miss Beverly awoke the next morning, sore and distressed, she looked back upon the night with a horror that sleep had been kind enough to interrupt only at intervals. The wretched hostelry lived long in her secret catalogue of terrors. Her bed was not a bed; it was a torture. The room, the table, the—but it was all too odious for description. Fatigue was her only friend in that miserable hole. Aunt Fanny had slept on the floor near her mistress' cot, and it was the good old colored woman's grumbling that awoke Beverly. The sun was climbing up the mountains in the east, and there was an air of general activity about the place. Beverly's watch told her that it was past 8 o'clock.

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed. "It's nearly noon, Aunt Fanny. Hurry along here and get me up. We must leave this abominable place in ten minutes." She was up and racing about excitedly.

"Befo' breakfas'?" demanded Aunt Fanny weakly.

"Goodness, Aunt Fanny, is that all you think about?"

"Well, honey, yo'll be thinkin' mighty serious 'bout breakfas' long to'ahnds 'lehen o'clock. Dat if I tummy o' yours'll be pow'ful mad 'cause, yo' didn't!"

"Very well, Aunt Fanny, you can run along and have the woman put up a breakfast for us, and we'll eat it on the road. I positively refuse to eat another mouthful in that awful dining room. I'll be down in ten minutes."

She was down in less. Sleep, no matter how hard earned, had revived her spirits materially. She pronounced herself ready for anything. There was a wholesome disdain for the rigors of the coming ride through the mountains in the way she gave orders for the start. The Russian officer met her

just outside the entrance to the inn. He was less English than ever, but he eventually gave her to understand that he had secured permission to escort her as far as Ganlook, a town in Graustark not more than fifteen miles from Edelweiss and at least two days from Balak. Two competent Axphainian guides had been retained, and the party was quite ready to start. He had been warned of the presence of brigands in the wild mountainous passes north of Ganlook. The Russians could go no farther than Ganlook because of a royal edict from Edelweiss forbidding the nearer approach of armed forces. At that town, however, he was sure she easily could obtain an escort of Graustark soldiers.

As the big coach crawled up the mountain road and farther into the oppressive solitudes Beverly Calhoun drew from the difficult lieutenant considerable information concerning the state of affairs in Graustark. She had been eagerly awaiting the time when something definite could be learned. Before leaving St. Petersburg early in the week she was assured that a state of war did not exist. The Princess Yette had been in Edelweiss for six weeks. A formal demand was framed soon after her return from America requiring Dawsbergen to surrender the person of Prince Gabriel to the authorities of Graustark. To this demand there was no definite response, Dawsbergen insolently requesting time in which to consider the proposition.

Axphain immediately sent an envoy to Edelweiss to say that all friendly relations between the two governments would cease unless Graustark took vigorous steps to recapture the royal assassin. On one side of the unhappy principality a strong, overbearing princess was egging Graustark on to fight, while on the other side an equally aggressive people defied Yette to come and take the fugitive, she could. The poor princess was between two ugly alternatives, and a struggle seemed inevitable. At Balak it was learned that Axphain had recently sent a final appeal to the government of Graustark, and it was no

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

The Australian tallgalla, or bush turkey, is the only bird that leaves the egg fully feathered. The egg of this breed is not hatched by the incubation of the mother, but by the heat of a mound of leaves which the old birds collect and in which the hen buries her eggs.—London Answers.

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